



Empowering Youth through Vocational Education in Jammu and Kashmir: Assessing the Role of Tourism and Hospitality Trade in Creating Employment

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the potential of vocational education, particularly in the tourism and hospitality trade, to empower youth in Jammu and Kashmir by creating employment opportunities. By examining the current landscape and challenges faced by youth in the region, along with the demand for skilled workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors, this paper assesses the effectiveness of vocational education programmes in addressing unemployment and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Through quantitative analysis, the study aims to provide insights into the role of vocational education in fostering economic growth and social development in Jammu and Kashmir. Recommendations for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders are proposed to enhance the impact of vocational education initiatives and maximize their contribution to youth empowerment and regional prosperity

INTRODUCTION

Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas, Jammu and Kashmir is a land of unparalleled beauty and cultural richness. However, beyond its stunning landscapes and vibrant traditions lies a region grappling with a complex array of socio-economic challenges, chief among them being the issue of youth unemployment. Against the backdrop of this pressing concern, the role of vocational education in empowering youth and fostering economic development takes on heightened significance. The youth of Jammu and Kashmir represent not only the future but also the driving force behind the region's progress and prosperity. Yet, despite their potential, many find themselves caught in the cycle of unemployment, unable to fully realize their aspirations and contribute meaningfully to their communities. This deep-rooted issue not only stifles individual growth but also poses a significant barrier to the region's overall development.

At the heart of this challenge lies the mismatch between the skills possessed by the youth and the demands of the labour market, particularly within the flourishing tourism and hospitality sectors. These industries, with their vast potential for growth and job creation, stand as beacons of hope amidst the prevailing economic uncertainty. However, their development is contingent upon a skilled workforce equipped to meet the evolving needs of the industry. In this context, vocational education emerges as a potent tool for bridging the skills gap and empowering youth with the practical knowledge and expertise needed to succeed in the workforce. By offering targeted training and hands-on experience in areas such as hospitality management, tour guiding, and culinary arts, vocational education programmes have the potential to unlock a world of opportunities for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, the promotion of vocational education aligns seamlessly with broader development agendas aimed at fostering inclusive growth and reducing disparities within society. By prioritizing skills development and employment generation, policymakers can not only address the immediate challenge of youth unemployment but also lay the foundation for sustainable economic development and social cohesion in the region. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to delve deeper into the role of vocational education in empowering youth and creating employment opportunities within the tourism and hospitality trade in Jammu and Kashmir. Through a comprehensive analysis of the current employment landscape, the demand for skilled workers, and the effectiveness of vocational education programmes, this research endeavors to provide actionable insights for stakeholders across the board. By shedding light on the potential of vocational education to drive positive change in the region, this study aims to pave the way for informed decision-making and targeted interventions aimed at unlocking the full potential of Jammu and Kashmir's youth. In doing so, it aspires to not only address the immediate challenge of unemployment but also to catalyze a broader transformation that uplifts individuals, strengthens communities, and propels the region towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A robust body of literature exists on the intersection of vocational education, youth empowerment, and economic development, providing valuable insights into the efficacy of vocational programmes in addressing unemployment and fostering sustainable livelihoods. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, however, the literature remains relatively sparse, underscoring the need for further research and analysis in this area. Several studies highlight the importance of vocational education in equipping youth with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in the workforce. For instance, research by Khan and Khan (2019) emphasizes the role of vocational training programmes in enhancing employability and income-generating opportunities among marginalized youth in conflict-affected regions. Similarly, Gupta et al. (2020) underscore the positive impact of vocational education on youth empowerment and social inclusion in rural areas.

Furthermore, studies focusing on the tourism and hospitality sectors emphasize the potential of these industries to drive economic growth and create employment opportunities, particularly in regions rich in natural and cultural heritage. For example, research by Sharma and Kumar (2018) explores the role of tourism in promoting sustainable development and poverty alleviation in mountainous regions, highlighting the importance of skilled human capital in supporting tourism-led growth. In the specific context of Jammu and Kashmir, research by Mir (2017) provides insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the tourism industry in the region, including issues related to infrastructure development, marketing, and human resource management. Similarly, studies by Malik and Pandita (2019) examine the potential of tourism as a catalyst for socio-economic development in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to harness the sector's full potential.

Despite these contributions, gaps remain in our understanding of how vocational education can be effectively leveraged to address youth unemployment and promote economic development in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly within the tourism and hospitality sectors. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the current state of vocational education, the demand for skilled workers, and the effectiveness of existing programmes in creating employment opportunities for youth in the region. Through a synthesis of existing literature and empirical findings, this research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders to maximize the impact of vocational education initiatives and propel the region towards greater prosperity.

METHODOLOGY

The method of the current study is qualitative. The Department of School Education and the J&K government provided the main information, and a variety of sources, including study papers, reports, official websites, and reports, provided the secondary information.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the different measures that the state of Jammu and Kashmir has taken to ensure that vocational education is implemented appropriately.
- To study the primary challenges and challenges related to vocational education in J&K schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The J&K Government's Programmes for Career Education

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has set up 803 vocational labs in the authorized government schools as a part of its drive for vocational education. Within educational institutions, vocational labs serve as specialized areas equipped with tools and resources to enable students to receive practical instruction as well as training in a range of vocational trades. The goal of these labs, which are an essential component of the vocational education structure, is to close the knowledge gap that exists between theory and practical abilities. During 2020–21, 626 of these labs were established in J&K. These Union Territory vocational laboratories provide instruction in the following fields: plumbing, retail, hospitality and tourism, beauty and wellness, IT, agriculture, automotives, makeup and home, electronic and hardware, and communication. The purpose of these laboratories is to teach young pupils in order to better equip them for the future. These vocational laboratories operate on the subject of women's empowerment and provide greater employment opportunities, particularly for girls. At the upper secondary school level, vocational education is emphasized.

Table 1 Students are allowed to pick the exact field in which they may train for a certain vocation at this level. Approximately 141 vocational labs for healthcare occupations, 122 for hospitality and travel, 115 for IT, 104 for retail jobs, 70 for agriculture, 50 for wellness and beauty industries and electronic devices & hardware, 46 for automotive, 44 for made-ups & homes, 41 for plumbing jobs, and 20 for telecommunication jobs are situated in J&K. These labs are all dedicated to promoting vocational education across various industries and preparing young people for a range of careers. In terms of higher education, Jammu and Kashmir is home to 59 technical, business, art, and craft institutions with a capacity of over 15, 76 students and 32 polytechnic institutions with over 7,000 students registered. The ongoing growth of schools and colleges of higher learning demonstrates that, despite the weaknesses of J&K's educational system, there has been considerable progress in the upgrading of educational standards. More than 200 private institutions, more than 140 governmental degrees, and 12 universities are located in Jammu and Kashmir.

Table 1. List of Vocational Labs situated in the various Jammu and Kashmir Districts

S. No.	Districts	Trade									Grand total	
		Anantnag	Agriculture	Apparels made ups & home furnishing	Beauty & wellness	Electronic & hardware	IT/Its	Plumbing	Retail	Telecommunications		Tourism and hospitality
1	Bandipora		4	4	1	3	6	5	1	5	6	35
2	Baramulla		1		4		1	1	5	2		14
3	Budgam		5	8	2		6	2	6	6		35
4	Doda		2	4		3	1	3	2		2	17
5	Ganderbal		6	2	2	6	5		1		3	25
6	Jammu			2	4	1	6	2		1	1	17
7	Kathua			4	6	2	3	1		2	6	24
8	Kishtwar		1	9	1	3	2	0	2	1	3	22
9	Kulgram		5			5		3	3	6	2	24
10	Kupwara		2	4	2			5	2	0	5	20
11	Poonch		3	1	4	2	2		2	2	3	19
12	Pulwama		2	2	6	3	5		4	3	6	31
13	Rajouri		4	3	2	1	6	1	5	5		27
14	Reasi		6	5	3	6	3	2		6		31
15	Samba			6	1		1	3		2		13
16	Shopain					2	5	4		3	2	16
17	Srinagar		1	6	2	1	2	6	5	4	1	28
18	Udhampur		6	3		4		2	4	6	2	27
Total			48	63	40	42	54	40	42	54	42	

The Mission of J&K Development of Skills

The Department of Skill Development, J&K, initiated the J&K Skill Development Mission. The programme that was designed particularly for the citizens of J&K closes the large skills gap that exists among youth and creates lucrative opportunities in the process. At the beginning, the Department had two polytechnics and seven ITIs. Eventually, there were sixty ITIs (six in the private sector and forty in the public sector) and thirty-two polytechnics (eight in the private sector and 24 in the public sector). Two of the 24 government polytechnics are run by the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) in Awantipora, Pulwama, and Baba Gulam Shah Badshah University (GBSBU) in Rajouri. Vocational instruction at the instructor's level Effective administration of vocational education at the school level has been made possible by the hiring of a full-time contracted teachers/trainers and visitor's teachers.

The principal and vocational coordinator, in cooperation with the school management committees, permanent and contract educators, the industry the school is affiliated with, and guest instructors who adhere to the established norms and criteria, are the primary stakeholders in the vocational education system. Through a rigorous selection process, the Vocational Training Partners (VTP) appoints the Trainers. Approximately 1,106 trainers are assigned to teach practical skills to pupils in Jammu and Kashmir's high and middle secondary schools. Of these, 540 trainers have been assigned in the Kashmir division and 566 trainers in the Jammu region.

Table 2 .A list of the number of trainers appointed in each of the J&K trades

Trade	Jammu	Kashmir	Total
Agricultural	35	36	71
Apparels, made-up & home furnished	26	22	48
Automotives	24	20	44
Beauty and wellness	36	22	58
Electronic and hardware	21	26	47
Healthcare	64	21	85
IT/ITs	25	24	49
Media skilling	18	16	34
Physical education and sports	31	25	56
Plumbing	21	21	42
Retail	26	25	51
Security	19	14	33
Telecommunications	12	26	38
Tourism and hospitality	56	49	105
Total	414	337	

An overview of the total amount of trainees appointed in different professions in Jammu and Kashmir may be seen in table 2, which was previously indicated. With 366 hired trainers overall, IT/ITeS leads the field, followed by healthcare (144) and tourism & hospitality (136). There are 70 trainers in the agricultural sector, 46 in apparel, 44 in structure and furniture for homes, and 46 in vehicles. With 189 and 159 trainers, accordingly, the IT/ITeS industry is notably well-represented in both Jammu and Kashmir. In the health care sector, Jammu has 96 more trainers than Kashmir (45). In a same vein, Jammu has 28 trainers in the hospitality and tourist industry field, while Kashmiri has 94. There are twenty trainers for telecommunications in Kashmir, but none in Jammu. There are 1106 trainers hired in total across all trades, which demonstrates the region's strong focus on developing skills and educative programmes.

Carrier Opportunities in Vocational Trade Tourism and Hospitality in J&K

Govt. of India has started Vocational education in Travel & Tourism where you can choose this subject from high school Level 1 up to Higher Secondary level 4. After completing your 4 levels you can directly enroll yourself for Travel and Tourism. The Travel and Tourism industry in india is currently experiencing unprecedented growth. The industry is one of the largest and most profitable industry in india contributes significantly to the foreign exchange earned. As per various studies, The industry is expected to create over 45 million jobs in India by 2025. Students have many career opportunities in this fast growing industry of travel and tourism. After completing your professional education in Travel and tourism you can choose to work for Travel agencies, Govt. Tourism departments, Tour operations, Advertising agencies Immigration and custom services, Airlines, Hotels,

Restaurants, Airports, Schools, Universities, Vocational Education Institutions, Polytechnic colleges, Cruises, Entertainment Industry, Mountaineering Institutes,, Railway department, Hospitality and Protocol, Indian Army, Indian Navy, SRTC, Wildlife Department, Newspapers, TV channels and the list continues. Further Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed G20 summit in 2023 which will boost the travel and tourism sector in the region and generate lots of Employment opportunities to the skilled workforce especially to the young youth who have achieved the vocational education in tourism and hospitality to seek these opportunities or the young youth who has knowledge and expertise in a sector they can open their own enterprise not to depend upon wholly on the Govt. Jobs which is very hard to get now a days. It will curb the unemployment in a region and surely will benefit the people as tourism has multiplier effect.

If you looking to pursue a career in Tourism industry must have a love for traveling along with the hunger to learn new things and knack of staying up to date with the latest news as well as socio- Economic trends of the world. The job profiles of this industry in both private and public sectors after travel & tourism courses in the same. Travel agent, Travel Executive, Travel Coordinator/Tourism officer Airlines/ Ground staff, Adventure Tour Guide Transport officer Travel escort, Travel counselor, Tour operator, Front office executive, Television Anchor/Reporter. Wildlife photographer, Vocational Teacher/Trainer and Travel writer. The most popular Travel & Tourism Universities/Colleges/Institutes in Jammu & Kashmir. Kashmir University, Jammu University, Central University of Jammu CU of Kashmir, BGSBU Rajouri, IHM Srinagar, Govt Poly- technic Jammu, Govt Polytechnic Bandipora and Amar Singh College Srinagar. You should now be in a better position to know what you are and what you can do. Now consider your career goal and assess your aptitudes, interests and personality traits. The career choices would narrow down when you try and think about it all, as you should now understand yourself better.

Covid Reaction and Career Training

In order to preserve the highest possible standard of vocational education outputs from its employees during the Covid-19 epidemic, the J&K government set new standards for the promotion of remote educational opportunities and concentrated on maintaining present trends. Based on data, new tactics were developed that improved the fundamental skills needed to get over challenges presented by pupils, educators, and parents. The thorough presentation among the pupils was presented virtually, with the main focus being on the parents' participation. All of the trainers have separate WhatsApp groups emerged. These organizations proved to be highly beneficial for establishing a knowledge base throughout the epidemic's course, as all of the VTs shared ideas and developments pertaining to vocational education.

CONCLUSION

The vocational training sector should be prioritised because it is through these kinds of programmes that young people from lower socioeconomic classes who make up the majority of the population can pursue self-employment in one form or another and become skilled workers. This would necessitate large industry investments in order to raise training standards to an exceptional degree, allowing kids to receive cutting-edge instruction. Because they would be more widely accepted, skilled workers would have more opportunities for employment. If action is not taken, the youth in general will keep pursuing pointless education, which will only make the state's unemployment problem worse and perhaps have unanticipated consequences down the road.

Like professions, vocational education is focused on preparing students for specific trades or careers. The primary focus is on applying previously acquired abilities in real-world situations. Students get more hands-on, career-focused learning. It gives students the chance to think about and nurture possible professional goals while preparing them for the future. The most accurate way to assess the value of vocational education is via academic research. This kind of education may assist with the development of work principles of conduct, ability to communicate, earning potential, social standing, and self-worth.

The young people of J&K have a great deal of potential to use their skill in an organized manner. To provide aspirant young with greater employment opportunities both domestically and abroad, vocational education should be encouraged in educational institutions alongside traditional and indigenous expertise. As of right now, 626 vocational labs have been set up in government schools. The Honorable LG of Jammu and Kashmir, together with the Honorable Adviser to the LG, the Deputy Chief Secretary of J&K, and the Assistant Principal Secretary of the State Department of School Education, formally inaugurated the laboratories. NEP-2020 designated 2000 schools to assess sixth and seventh-grade students' skills. 40 schools were selected using the Hub and Spoke model.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

In writing this article the researcher realizes that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, writing, and form of presentation considering the limited knowledge and abilities of the researchers themselves. Therefore, for the perfection of the article, the researcher expects constructive criticism and suggestions from various parties.

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